

**CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND
(MINUTES ADOPTED 2/28/05)**

**EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SESSION, PRESENTATION, REGULAR MEETING &
WORKSESSION
OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

Monday, January 24, 2005

OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Mayor Porter	City Manager Matthews
Councilmember Austin-Lane	City Clerk Waters
Councilmember Barry	ECD Director Daines
Councilmember Elrich	Senior Planner Inerfeld
Councilmember Seamens	
Councilmember Williams	

OFFICIALS ABSENT:

Councilmember Mizeur

The Council convened at 7:38 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building, 7500 Maple Avenue, Takoma Park, Maryland.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mayor Porter noted that Councilmember Mizeur is very sick this evening and will not be in attendance. She commented on the lack of water to the building and the absence of restroom facilities. WSSC is trying to isolate the problem. A couple of items have been dropped from the agenda (to be rescheduled) to facilitate getting through the meeting as soon as possible.

Councilmember Seamens remarked that he has recently heard some concerns from residents about trust of the City and its officials. He has had his own concerns about the City's compliance with the Open Meetings Act. Since a discussion of the Act has not been put on the agenda, he has prepared a paper on the subject (copies distributed).

Councilmember Austin-Lane commented that the *Gazette* paper quoted, for the second time, that the Council was going to borrow up to \$2.5M for the community center.

Councilmember Barry thanked the Public Works staff for their efforts in snow removal. He has heard good comments from residents.

ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS

Ms. Porter noted the three items postponed on the agenda.

Ms. Austin-Lane questioned when it became known that these items would be postponed.

Ms. Porter explained that this afternoon, she got word from City staff about the situation with the lack of water to the building. We then discussed removing some items from the agenda to shorten the meeting.

Ms. Austin-Lane remarked that she would appreciate notice when items are dropped from the agenda. She did not learn of this until arrival this evening, even after having spoken with Executive Assistant Forster today, who did not mention the lack of water.

Ms. Porter responded that she had different understanding; she thought there had been contact. It was certainly her intent. She also hoped that Ms. Mizeur was notified about the resolution regarding recognition of Jan Schwartz.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Ms. Porter noted the minutes proposed for adoption, adding that she has recommended that those for 3/15/04 be further postponed for later consideration. She explained that there are a couple of sets which are being proposed for re-adoption.

Mr. Seamens questioned whether the notation regarding the Closed Session is adequate. He asked whether there should be some note of actions taken.

Ms. Porter requested his suggestion for a change in format.

Mr. Seamens suggested that there might be some statement about the action taken.

Ms. Porter stated that actions taken are noted but that if there is no action taken, there is generally no remark. She commented on the summary form that she prepares for each Closed Session. The Council generally receives a briefing. It does not make sense to pass a set of minutes and then bring them back to look at them later for re-consideration. She would suggest that questionable minutes be postponed and later addressed.

Ms. Austin-Lane supported postponing the minutes that include closed session captions.

Ms. Porter noted that the recommendation to include a statement of “no action taken” is a new one.

Mr. Seamens agreed.

Mr. Williams moved adoption of the 1/3/05 minutes (seconded by Seamens). The minutes of 1/3/05 were adopted unanimously (VOTING FOR: Porter, Austin-Lane, Barry, Elrich, Seamens, Williams; ABSENT: Mizeur).

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Sabrina Barron indicated that she has questions about the Wayfinder Signage issue that will be discussed later tonight. She has concerns about the size, height and the type of signs being proposed in this project. They can be anywhere from 10-20 feet tall. That is pretty tall. She recognized that the height of the sign will be dependent on the size of the lettering that is required by SHA, but would suggest that the signs be kept to 8 feet, especially in the Historic District. We have a real concern about the directional signs, as well as the type of signs. We would like some sort of mark-up or photo example that could be provided to the community groups interested in this project, and would also like to see the type of materials that are being proposed for the signs. While a series of meetings have been held, in the most recent phase of the project, there has been a failure in this element of the process. She commented on some of the notice shortfalls. She learned that city staff had submitted a final design concept to the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) before Historic Takoma (HT) and other groups had an opportunity to review and comment. She questioned how other comments would get incorporated into the final design. This mistake has been rectified. She thanked city staff and the HPC for their recognition of this shortfall. The final plan has been delayed.

PRESENTATION

1. Update on Community Center Construction Project.

Ms. Matthews noted the memo distributed this evening from Paul Chrostowski, summarizing the subject. She suggested that the Council discuss this topic in early February, since the staff will need some direction on how to incorporate green principles and environmental enhancements into the design. She noted that staff is researching some green principles, the skylight and the elevator. The cost of some of those elements may be in excess of \$200,000. The elevator is at least \$100,000. We have been working with a company in Colorado that does a lot of work with energy efficient skylights. We would need to be careful about the roofing construction, given that the skylight would be later installed.

Ms. Austin-Lane remarked that we have already contracted to do part of the work related to the elevator. The shaft is in the plan.

Ms. Matthews stated that when we went through the value engineering process, the shaft was included. The mechanics for the elevator were not included in the Knott Construction contract.

Ms. Austin-Lane asked whether the intent was to include the elevator in Phase I or II.

Ms. Matthews responded that this is a decision for the Council. She would suggest that we

finish the community level before making a decision, so that we can stay within the bond funds for the work.

Mr. Williams said that the elevator and skylight do not have timing issues. We can wait until we can continue to evaluate available funding.

Ms. Austin-Lane commented that she is very appreciative that Ms. Matthews has quickly responded to residents' interests in the green elements, as well as the memo from Paul.

Ms. Matthews added thanks to two others--George Archibald and Jay Levy, noting that there are issues with the pipes to the building which have resulted in the absence of the water to the building.

Ms. Austin-Lane questioned whether this is a result of construction.

Ms. Matthews replied that WSSC sent a representative here earlier this evening, and it does not appear to be their problem. Staff has talked to the construction supervisor, and it may be that one of the pipes were not adequately heat wrapped.

Ms. Austin-Lane asked whether it is the responsibility of the contractor.

Ms. Matthews explained that they are responsible for cold weather protection. They have indicated that the heat wrap may have failed.

Ms. Austin-Lane noted that there is a meeting tomorrow night of the liaison committee regarding the community center. It is open to the public. Council appointments can continue. They will be talking about operating costs for the building. Operating costs may be something that the Council should have a point person present for the discussion. We have heard from residents that there is a desire to have a Councilmember in the discussion. She is considering that role and will be attending tomorrow night.

Mr. Seamens remarked that it is in the purview of the City Manager to provide the operating cost estimates. He expressed appreciation for residents' input; but ultimately this is the role of the City Manager.

Ms. Matthews stated that the committee will be discussing the gym, operating costs and green principles.

Mr. Elrich commented that we need to quickly get into the operating costs because this will be important in the budget discussions.

Ms. Porter announced that there is a meeting tomorrow night in the Chambers, sponsored by M-NCPPC to discuss a proposal that is coming before their planning board with respect to zoning regulations for hospital expansions. The meeting will be televised on the cable channel.

REGULAR MEETING

2. 2nd Reading Ordinance re: Local Government Infrastructure Program Bond for the Community Center.

Ms. Matthews noted that we have had the program manager and someone in the Attorney General's Office review the ordinance. Changes are highlighted. They are non-substantive changes. The City Attorney has recommended that the Council adopt the changes as an "amendment" prior to adoption.

Moved by Elrich; seconded by Williams (as accepted at 1st Reading).

Moved by Williams; seconded by Elrich (with proposed amendments).

Mr. Seamens remarked that assessments and costs of homes are going up dramatically in the city. He asked about the status of the appraisals on the Piney Branch properties.

Ms. Matthews responded that she talked to staff today about this issue. The hope is to have the results in a couple of weeks. Since this involves appraisals, she would probably ask for a Closed Session to discuss the results. The ECD Director has indicated that we have received some expressions of interest.

Mr. Seamens questioned if there is any interest in the assessed value.

Ms. Matthews said that she believes (and can confirm) that the assessed value is in the range of \$350,000 to \$375,000.

No public comment on the amendments.

Amendments passed without objection.

Ms. Austin-Lane proposed an additional amendment to reduce the total from \$2.6M to \$2.5M (up to this amount). She noted having raised this concern last week, repeating that the *Gazette* has published, on two occasions, the amount of \$2.5M. We should be more clear with the public about the Council's intent (seconded by Seamens).

No public comment on the amendment.

Ms. Porter expressed appreciation for the concern about being clear to the public. We discussed this matter last week. The amount of the bond is \$2.5M. The additional \$100,000 is for the issuance costs. We have the choice of paying the issuance cost up-front and incorporating it in the overall bond total (as recommended by the City Manager).

Mr. Williams said that if this amount is determined to be the amount needed to finish some

specific elements, he would not want to reduce the amount. The explanation about how we got to the \$2.6M is correct. He supported the total of \$2.6M.

Ms. Austin-Lane commented that the concern is that we have not clearly communicated with the public about this. How can we make sure this does not happen again? If we do not look closely at what we have done, then we cannot improve it. She is not disputing that the \$100,000 may be needed but wants to ensure that this does not happen again.

Mr. Elrich stated that we do not own the *Gazette*. We talked about how to handle the issuance costs. It is not our responsibility to change what we need to do because it was wrongly reported by the paper.

Ms. Austin-Lane asked if we took all steps to make our decision clear.

Mr. Elrich responded that it is not feasible to send out an explanatory flyer after each meeting. Beginning discussions involved greater totals.

Ms. Austin-Lane questioned whether the Communications Office could be in more contact with the newspaper. If we want public trust, we have to be clear about what we are and are not doing. When a reporter comes to the wrong conclusion, it suggests that we have to be more clear. She asked for a recorded vote on the issue of the amendment.

The proposed amendment failed (VOTING FOR: Austin-Lane, Seamens; NAY: Porter, Barry, Elrich, Williams).

Mr. Seamens said that he supports the community center and hopes to one day see the gym built. He has a problem voting in favor of the bond without knowing whether this is enough money to finish the project. He heard information in last week's Closed Session that suggested this may not be enough. He noted remarks made by Mr. Williams about construction elements. It is important to know how we are going to pay our bills. We need to look at this loan in the context of the budget. As interest rates go up, construction costs go down.

Mr. Williams remarked that we will not see construction costs go down on work that is already underway. If we do not approve this ordinance tonight, we will not get to participate in the Spring issuance of the state bond program. We would then have to wait until the Fall issuance. He does not see that the project would be finished under those circumstances. He recalled comments from the public hearing when people supported the bond and recognized that even additional funds may be required in the future. In case we end up with extra money from this bond (referring to a provision (page 5) that would allow for prepayment of the bonds), we could use it toward repayment of the bond.

Ms. Austin-Lane stated her understanding that we could not pay it back until 2015.

Ms. Matthews agreed. The bonds are not redeemable until 10 years after issuance. She referred

to the document in response to Mr. Williams' statement.

Mr. Williams restated his reference to language under Section 6B.

Ms. Austin-Lane said that the only thing we can do right now is to take out a loan to meet the commitments that we have to the building that is underway. It is not advisable to take monies out of our current budget. This project is a capital improvement. The Council has had difficulty identifying large cuts in the budget. Without borrowing, it does not seem possible to come up with the amount of money needed. We have gone through the correct process about informing the public about deliberations to take out a loan. She noted the mailing that went out before Christmas announcing the issuance and public hearing that was held on January 10th. Though it is a difficult step to take, it is one that is in the best interest of the city. She will vote in favor of the ordinance, although would have liked to see it reduced to \$2.5M. This is a sound way to proceed.

Mr. Elrich also agreed that we should proceed with the loan. It will afford some remaining work, as well as some work that has already been contracted. Demobilizing the contractor will only result in greater costs. We have the option of going into the budget and dealing with the tax rate and/or making cuts in services. The Council has that authority. This is a difficult and unpleasant decision—as has been the project. This is the responsible way to move forward.

Ms. Porter disagreed with Mr. Seamens' impression that the information from the Closed Session indicated that this would not be enough to fund the identified elements of the project. The project is much better managed under the new manager. If you finance it this way, the cost is spread across the users over the upcoming number of years. There are good reasons that projects like this get financed with borrowed money. We are paying for a very large capital expenditure over a long period of time. We do not want to leave the impression that borrowing money is a bad thing to do. This gets the cost paid for over the time that the center is in use.

Mr. Seamens noted some other capital needs related to the library and public works. Without those discussions and a better understanding of how to pay for this loan, he will vote against the ordinance.

Ms. Porter remarked that there were some early discussions about the library and other alternatives to the project.

Alain Thery said he will largely repeat comments from last week. Ms. Austin-Lane makes a point about communication. Residents asked for some information about minimal numbers for the costs of elements to finish the building and some information about the skylight. We were going to use this information to determine the amount of the bond. The reverse has occurred. There are advantages to borrowing, but the total borrowed dollars continues to grow. He would be more comfortable with borrowing to afford the elements that have been estimated. He stated that the Council seems to be a bit nervous about whether the \$2.6M will be enough. He is not arguing against the borrowing, but about the way we are going about it. Mr. Therry questioned

whether the application deadline is firm.

Ms. Matthews responded that the filing deadline for the application is 4:00 p.m. on Friday. In discussions with the State, it was indicated that the city had some latitude to reduce the amount but could not increase it. There has to be a specific amount identified in the application.

Ms. Austin-Lane said that she also had the impression that we would have some numbers from staff and a list of things that are in/out of the funding consideration at this point (i.e., skylight, brick walkway, elevator). Her understanding from the hearing was that the numbers would come back to the Council. She is not clear whether the \$2.6 M will cover these items.

Ms. Matthews noted that the last detailed report was distributed to the Council in December. Numbers have not changed. The same information was included in the flyer to the community. The “unknown” is the cost for the plaza level. The average of the two bids that were received is in excess of \$800,000. Combined, she thinks that the additional items will be in excess of \$200,000.

Ms. Austin-Lane commented that she assumed that this loan would pay for the project that is underway, including the completion of the plaza level. We want to get as much as possible for our money. Anything else we can get out of the loan would be desirable. We should not relax our vigilance with the current contractor or any in the future. She appreciates the City Manager’s involvement in taking the hard line. We have improved the project with her oversight of the project. She appreciates Ms. Matthews’ responses to Mr. Therry.

Ms. Porter remarked that we need about \$2.3M to finish the work underway and the plaza. Any remaining money would be available for the skylight, elevator and some green elements. We are close enough with our numbers to borrow \$2.5 (with the \$100,000 for the issuance cost – total \$2.6M).

Mr. Barry remarked that it might be wise to borrow even more. We will not know the total cost of this project until the last nail is put into the building. The City Manager, attorney and other staff have used their best judgment to identify the estimated costs. But he cautioned that the public should not be surprised if we later come back with a need to find additional monies.

Mr. Williams said it was not his understanding that right after the hearing (1/10/05), we would get firm numbers back on some of the additional pieces. We will not know until closer to the end of the project.

Mr. Seamens agreed with Mr. Barry. The City Manager has done a great job of coming up with best estimates. She is moving the Council in the right direction.

Ordinance #2005-2 (VOTING FOR: Porter, Austin-Lane, Barry, Elrich, Williams; NAY: Seamens; ABSENT: Mizeur).

**Ordinance #2005-2
(Attached)**

3. Resolution re: Declaring the City's Intent to Reimburse Community Center Expenditures from Bond Proceeds.

Ms. Matthews explained the resolution.

Mr. Seamens asked for clarification. Have we committed money now, that we do not currently have?

Ms. Matthews responded that we will have to use existing city funds to pay invoices that are we are now receiving. We will later use the bond proceeds to reimburse the city. We have a contract with Knott Construction and are dealing with change orders that are being identified.

Mr. Seamens recalled Mr. Arrendondo's law suit and his complaint about the city committing money without having it budgeted.

Ms. Porter restate that the City has a contract with Knott Construction and that there are a number of change orders. She does not think it is a budget item.

Ms. Matthews said she would be happy to look that section of the Charter to confirm.

Mr. Williams remarked that we have money in the bank. We have reserves and may end up in a position of having to use reserve monies to pay for the change orders.

Moved by Williams; seconded by Barry.

Alain Therry stated that this is creative budgeting. The city should not spend beyond the budget. The community center is a separate fund. This is the weirdest bit of accounting that he has ever heard. He looks at the fiscal impact noted on the agenda item cover page as having stated as "none." It should be the same amount as of the previous item. The community center is off-budget.

Ms. Porter responded that she does not agree with Mr. Therry's characterization of "off-budget".

Ms. Austin-Lane remarked that the community center is not in the general operating budget.

Ms. Matthews commented that there are a number of funds within the budget (e.g., general fund, special revenue, etc.). Each fund was identified in the budget ordinance and each are included in the annual audit. She would not consider it as part of the operating budget. A separate fund was created to address the center as a capital project. Once the project is completed, the operating costs will be put into the departmental budgets.

Ms. Austin-Lane hopes that it is more clear in this coming budget process, claiming that it was not clear last year.

Ms. Matthews noted the community center fund that will be reflected in the FY06 budget (largely, construction elements). The operating costs will be broken out across departments.

Resolution #2005-3 was adopted (VOTING FOR: Porter, Austin-Lane, Barry, Elrich, Seamens, Williams; ABSENT: Mizeur).

RESOLUTION #2005-3
(Attached)

4. 2nd Reading Ordinance re: Expanding the Permit Parking Area on Boston Avenue.

Ms. Porter explained the item.

Ms. Austin-Lane noted a conversation with the City Manager and residents of Boston Avenue, in the past week. The day after we discussed this last week it snowed which made the problem even worse. The request came in last September. She encouraged immediate signage and vigorous enforcement.

Moved by Austin-Lane; seconded by Elrich.

Ordinance #2005-1 was adopted (VOTING FOR: Porter, Austin-Lane, Barry, Elrich, Seamens, Williams; ABSENT: Mizeur).

ORDINANCE #2005-1
(Attached)

5. 2nd Reading Ordinance re: Agreement for Financial and Accounting Consulting Services.

Ms. Porter explained the item.

Mr. Seamens expressed appreciation to the City Manager for bringing forth this matter and the information related to have exceeding the legal limit for contracting with Ms. McKenzie. What has been done to alleviate this from happening in the future? Is there any cap on the contract?

Ms. Matthews responded in the affirmative. She will be monitoring the billings. There is a cap of \$45,000 (i.e., includes, hourly rate, mileage and housing allowance). If there were to come a time when we are approaching that amount, she would bring the matter back to the Council.

Mr. Seamens questioned whether the prior contract had a limit.

Ms. Matthews commented that it was open-ended.

Mr. Elrich asked how soon we can anticipate filling the vacancy and how does this impact the contract expiration.

Ms. Matthews said that her estimate is based on approximately 40 hours per week over the next couple of months to finish the audit and then scale-back services. She will look at applications on February 1st. Ms. Matthews noted the requirements of a desired candidate for the position of Treasurer. The new person may be on board by mid-March or April.

Mr. Elrich asked a question about the timing of the new hire and the work of Ms. McKenzie.

Ms. Matthews stated that she is not happy with the delay in the audit. If we were not to use the services of Ms. McKenzie, we would be bringing in a new person with a terrible situation to resolve.

Mr. Williams said that we are where we need to be on this item. He recalled last week's discussion and comments that basically dragged Ms. McKenzie through the mud about things that took place 8 years ago. She adequately attempted to address those issues with her superiors. He would suggest in the future that Councilmembers raise these type of questions with the City Manager to allow time to get more information. It was not appropriate for it to have happened the way it did last week.

Ms. Porter agreed. Ms. McKenzie retired after 30 years of dedicated service to the city. She retired to spend more time with her family and moved out of the area. When it became clear that the experiment of combining the positions of Clerk and Treasurer would be challenging, she agreed to come back out of commitment to the city. She has a long experience with the city. Ms. Porter has always had confidence in her work. She has always been an honest and loyal employee, and appreciates that she is willing to help us in this way.

Ms. Austin-Lane noted the issue raised last week was about the \$7,000 in last year's budget and the \$7,000 in this year's budget. It is her feeling that the transition in managers made it unclear to staff how to best, bring forth concerns to the City Manager's attention that relate to the best interest of the City and in compliance with the City's ordinances. We need a very good budget document presented this year so that we can get on to the hard work that is ahead of us.

Ms. Porter emphasized that during the period of time that the expenditures were made for the contract with Ms. McKenzie, she was not a city employee.

Moved by Williams; seconded by Barry.

Ordinance #2005-3 (NAY: Seamens; ABSTAIN: Austin-Lane; VOTING FOR: Porter, Barry, Elrich, Williams; ABSENT: Mizeur).

ORDINANCE #2005-3

(Attached)

Ms. Porter noted that Ms. Mizeur is not here this evening, but that she had stated that had she been present, she would have voted in favor of all voting items on the agenda.

CONSENT AGENDA

Moved by Williams; seconded by Elrich.

A. Resolution re: Appointments to the Nuclear Free Takoma Park Committee

Resolution #2005-4
(Attached)

B. Resolution re: Appointments to the Facade Advisory Board

Resolution #2005-5
(Attached)

(VOTING FOR: Porter, Austin-Lane, Barry, Elrich, Seamens, Williams; ABSENT: Mizeur.)

BREAK - The Council recessed for a scheduled break at 9:10 p.m. and later reconvened in Worksession.

WORKSESSION

7. Gateway Wayfinding Sign System.

ECD Director Daines clarified two points. She told the Board of Historic Takoma at their January 13th meeting that we had submitted our proposal to the HPC staff. The intent was to present a conceptual design process, similar to what we are doing this evening for the Council. Unfortunately, it was lost in that communication that the proposal was not being submitted for final permit. It was a communication issue.

Ms. Porter said that Ms. Baron's comments had to do with the order of discussion with different groups. Historic Takoma may have had helpful comments early in the process.

Ms. Daines remarked that Historic Takoma (HT) has been involved in the process since the beginning, along with other stakeholders in the design review process (participating in conversations about the design of the system, the sign board design, discussions at the AHC level and in other forums). We have not received anything formally in writing from HT since the meeting on January 13th.

Ms. Austin-Lane questioned the timing of the formal presentation to the HT Board.

Ms. Daines responded that it was on January 13th.

Ms. Austin-Lane remarked that this project is too important for us to simply notify someone after it is all planned.

Ms. Daines stated that we have invited Board members and officers to a variety of meetings. She noted the meetings when HT Board members have attended meetings.

Ms. Porter suggested that the discussion is getting into too much detail. The point is to think of HT as a resource in providing input prior to things going to HPC.

Ms. Baron commented that she did not say that the HT Board members were not included, but no full presentation was made to the full Board until January 13th. At that time the “final” design had already gone to the HPC. Her point was how public comments would be incorporated into a completed design.

Mr. Williams asked that staff reiterate the misunderstanding with the HPC process.

Ms. Daines stated that the original intent was to present the design to the HPC as a conceptual design for review and comment. It is a preliminary review. In the process of submitting the information, it was interpreted as an actual application for a permit. We will be going through the entire process and will be going back to the HPC regarding each sign location.

Senior Planner Inerfeld referred to the agenda item and attachment, illustrating a secondary gateway sign. He wants to review the community input that has been received since the last presentation. Generally, people are supportive of the sign system. He wants to highlight a few of the remarks. There is some opinion that the tertiary gateways divide the city. Some discussion about the reference to “Old Takoma” and possibly, use of a title that refers to the shopping district.

Ms. Austin-Lane noted that the Takoma/Langley Crossroads area is simply referred to as “Crossroads.”

Mr. Inerfeld responded. Signs that refer people to the crossroads would be more specific about “Takoma/Langley Crossroads.”

Ms. Austin-Lane said that it gets into more text, referring back to the suggested use of “Old Town” and “Takoma Junction” in full text).

Mr. Inerfeld remarked about some other summary points from the submitted comments. In general, there is community support.

Ms. Austin-Lane stated that after the last discussion and the efforts made by Mr. Inerfeld and her to notify the community, we got good feedback. There was a lot of thanks for the information

provided. She appreciates staff assistance in getting information to the community and hopes that we can now get to the design of the signs.

Mr. Inerfeld referred to the sign location map and the sign message list. The State Highway Administration (SHA) requires that there only be three destinations per sign. We may be able to get them to grant exceptions for a few (4 destinations). We need to determine if we want to request exceptions. He is not recommending that the directional signs be in the first phase of implementation. Staff has talked with SHA and believes that we may get some flexibility. The map shows the approximate locations for the signs. Staff is recommending 34 locations for tertiary signs. He explained how the locations would be identified—any questions about the locations and what they will say.

Ms. Porter referred to the illustration of the example sign. She commented on deleting the circle around the arrows. We should use more arrows. The signs are too big. She supported the request for more information on the signs. We need to be very clear about what is on the signs. We do not have a solution.

Mr. Inerfeld remarked about the size of the sign in the illustration. SHA has certain requirements about the size of lettering on signs. It is dependent on the posted speed limit.

Ms. Austin-Lane asked for clarification about the stretch of Philadelphia where there is a 30 mph posted speed limit.

Mr. Inerfeld stated that he can confirm the locations of postings. We are not proposing the larger signs at any location in the city.

Ms. Austin-Lane noted that she sent a summary of the e-mails that she received. The main issue was the size. There were remarks about the colors, tag lines, size and that there is a need for a sign inventory. She does not think that the city should pay for a sign, whether SHA approves it or not.

Mr. Inerfeld said that he made a mistake and posted the larger sign on the web site. He has since responded to persons who had concerns after seeing the web site graphic.

Ms. Daines added further clarification. We are asking for an exception from SHA to use the smaller signs.

Ms. Austin-Lane questioned whether staff feels that this sign is too big and out-of-scale for our neighborhood.

Mr. Inerfeld said that the Council could make a decision not to put signs on state roads. The state regulates the signs on their roads.

Ms. Daines remarked that we could limit the number of identified destinations on the signs, but

that we have to follow the state rules.

Ms. Porter asked about the part of the space on the signs reserved for the city logo.

Mr. Inerfeld responded that there is none on the directional signs.

Mr. Seamens said he is not sure that he appreciates this coming to the Council tonight. These signs do not look like our community. He really supports the idea of the directional signs. It makes sense, and we need to focus on economic development in the city. He has heard that the directional signs are important. There are pros/cons to the directional signs. They do not look like a representation of Takoma Park. They do not have the historic feel that he associates with the city. He suggested breaking down the sign and wonders if fewer words would be better, resulting in smaller signs. He thanked HT members for their input and remarked about the 6 signs proposed for Takoma Junction. He does not want to see that many signs, of the proposed size and magnitude, in that small area. He wants to scale back the project. They are nice signs. The bottom line is that the signs leads to an appearance of someone driving into Bethesda and not Takoma Park. This is where he feels uncomfortable with this topic.

Mr. Williams stated that he kind of agrees. He referred to the illustration. The reaction is that there is a lot of empty space at the bottom of the sign.

Ms. Daines said that other depictions are better laid-out, in terms of lettering and placement.

Mr. Williams remarked that we should push for a waiver to install 4 foot signs versus the SHA required, 6 foot signs. He said that the state roads in the city should all be posted at 25 mph and that we need lower, height sized signs.

Mr. Inerfeld stated that we always have the option of building the sign system without the directional signs (larger ones that are being discussed).

Ms. Daines displayed a presentation board illustrating the 5 different style signs.

Mr. Williams commented that the sense is that we will be better off if we get things like the gateway and destination signs. Why are directional signs important?

Mr. Inerfeld responded. If you do not know all of the streets, it is hard to know how to get to some locations in the city. The Council could make decisions about a limited number of directional signs.

Ms. Austin-Lane remarked that there is a tension between directing drivers/pedestrians adequately and keeping the signs small. The different scales exist in different locations in the city. She wants to be sure that we get this right and encouraged the Council to continue to channel ideas to staff. We have to keep at it.

Mr. Williams commented in support of the effective signage in Bethesda.

Mr. Seamens wondered if there is some momentum on the Council to ask for another directional sign that might be available for use in neighborhoods where it is appropriate (e.g., single destination sign). The directional/destination signs are most important from an economic development perspective, but on the other side, they are the most problematic.

Ms. Daines asked for clarification. Are you talking about a totally different design?

Mr. Seamens recognized that the community has embraced the presented designs. He would like to explore ways to scale down the size of the signs.

Ms. Porter expressed appreciation for the picture. It clarifies some of her concerns. She agrees with the comments about the signs being too big. We do not know all of the restrictions. However, if she were standing near a sign, she would feel that it is towering over her. There is something about the color. It is obtrusive. She commented on the signs in the picture. Was there any discussion about a toned down color and/or black-and-white signs?

Mr. Inerfeld commented that there was no discussion of black-and-white. Once we have a firm on-board, we can actually look at samples.

Ms. Porter questioned whether a green background was considered.

Mr. Inerfeld responded that green is a standard color used by SHA on highway signs. We wanted something different, but could look at a smaller font size for the sign text on the non-SHA streets. There is one version of the directional sign where there are only two destinations on the sign.

Ms. Porter commented on here sense that there is no one happy with the size of the directional signs.

Mr. Seamens said he likes the suggestions made by Mr. Inerfeld about further research of options.

Ms. Austin-Lane commented on how reducing the number of destinations would make a sign smaller. She suggested a mock-up of a sign.

Lorraine Pearsall urged that we need a mock-up. The illustration distributed tonight really shows the impact. This type of picture would have been very important at the beginning of the project. The gateway sign is huge. These signs are not gentle signs. They are attention-getting and a bit on the cold side. You appreciate the size of the signs when you see this type of computer mock-up. We would also like to see some of the materials. This process has been very consultant driven. There was not a choice with materials. There was a concept that was brought forward. A decision had already been made. She appreciates remarks made by Mr.

Seamens. A lot about this project is troubling.. This is sign pollution. Pictures of this type would have been helpful in the beginning of the project. The base and sign color are issues. She expressed some disappointment, adding that this fell down in the beginning of the project. She is concerned about how this will look on our streets. This was going to be a more pedestrian sign system. Historic Takoma (HT) is concerned about the size of the signs.

Ms. Porter recalled that early-on, we got some options for sign design and materials, but that she appreciates the point about not having a clear understanding of the impact on the community without seeing the mock-up.

Mr. Inerfeld summarized that it seems that the issue is with the directional signs. Staff could explore additional options to reduce the size and come back for a later presentation.

Ms. Austin-Lane clarified that her remarks had to do with color, tag lines, log and sign pollution, all based on community input.

Ms. Porter said that she is not sure where we are at this point. She has heard concerns about some of the other signs.

Mr. Williams suggested that we get more photographic mock-ups of the different signs in other locations in the city. He would like to see the illustration presented tonight, depicted with only two destinations. We might even see a green sign in the same mock-up.

Ms. Daines responded that staff will have to go back and talk to the design firm. These things are outside the scope of services and there may be an additional cost.

Mr. Inerfeld stated that for this to be done in-house, it would require some shifting of priorities. We might be able to do some, but takes a considerable amount of time.

Mr. Williams said that he sees the issues as size and color.

Mr. Seamens remarked that we do not need a high-tech mock-up.

Ms. Austin-Lane agreed that we cannot spend more on design concepts. As much information as we can get back without additional cost from designer would be appreciated.

Ms. Daines commented that Ilona is working on other deadline projects. Staff would have to shift priorities. She explained the project deadlines and timeline in order to get the project before the State Board of Public Works for approval. We have to have information ready by the beginning of March.

Mr. Inerfeld explained that it would be helpful to take photos from other communities as examples.

Mr. Williams noted that he liked the example of the Kensington signs, and that the mock-up has snow in the background which would make any sign look “hot.”

Mr. Inerfeld suggested that the Council might consider phasing the project.

Ms. Porter stated that the proposal is to go forward with some of the smaller signs and that there needs to be more work on the color. The Council needs to give staff direction on which way to proceed.

Ms. Daines noted the upcoming meetings/discussions of the project.

Mr. Inerfeld remarked about flexibility in what gets approved by the state. The color decision could be delayed.

Ms. Daines commented on whether there is a goal to maintain some consistency in the system.

Ms. Porter suggested that the Council go with Mr. Inerfeld’s proposal—go forward with the kiosk, tertiary and park signs, with an understanding that we will further work on a decision about color.

Ms. Daines asked for clarification (i.e., not going to include the primary, secondary or directional signs).

Mr. Seamens asked about the budget.

Ms. Daines responded that it is about \$17,000 for the first phase.

Mr. Inerfeld said that the cost estimates presented are high.

Ms. Austin-Lane questioned whether we are going to apply for more money.

Ms. Daines responded that we have talked to local institutions and associations.

Ms. Austin-Lane asked about revitalization funds.

Ms. Daines stated that the deadlines for that program come in the Fall. These monies come out of a special appropriation by the state.

Mr. Seamens remarked that the primary focus should be on the directional signs. So, it would be his preference to see what we could do with the size of those signs.

Ms. Austin-Lane said that if we resolve the issue with the directional signs, then the other things fall into place. (Seamens seconded proposal to deal with the directional sign issues)

Ms. Porter stated that the Council will come back in a couple of weeks to discuss some expanded options for the directional signs.

Ms. Pearsall announced the meeting scheduled with HPC this Wednesday and another meeting on February 9th.

Ms. Daines said that staff would still like to go before HPC on Wednesday to get additional feedback. They may have some suggestions.

EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SESSION

Ms. Porter announced that the Council will have an Executive Session next week starting at 7:30 p.m. (i.e., 6-month evaluation of the City Manager).

ADJOURNMENT

The Council adjourned for the evening at 10:46 p.m.